

## GREETINGS FROM COOLIDGE SCHOOL

October 7, 2013

[www.shrewsbury-ma.gov/schools/coolidge](http://www.shrewsbury-ma.gov/schools/coolidge)

Dear Families,

Last week the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) released MCAS (state assessment) scores for schools across the state. Shrewsbury families of students in grades three and four received individualized score reports outlining their child's progress here at Coolidge. I am sure many of you also tuned into Dr. Sawyer's report to School Committee about Shrewsbury's results overall. So, how did we do? Overall, district scores are strong. However, in general our scores this year are not as strong as they were last year—and certainly not as high as we'd like them to be. Let me tell you a bit about our scores at Coolidge and what we're learning from them.

To begin with, when our "overall" scores by subject are reported, it's the average of grade three and grade four scores. Yet at Coolidge students at these two grade levels perform very differently, so the 'aggregate' scores alone are misleading. For example, last spring 86% of our fourth graders scored 'Proficient' or 'Advanced' in Math, with 84% of our fourth graders scoring similarly in ELA. This is an increase of about 5% from our scores in 2012. In contrast, only 67% of last year's third graders scored Proficient or better, which is a drop of about 10% from 2012. Similarly, we experienced a drop of 11% in our ELA scores for third grade; only 74% of our students scored Proficient or higher. This means that Coolidge's growth data was terrific, even while our overall achievement data is something we're looking to improve. So how do we do that?

Teacher teams at both levels have been busy analyzing the data, meeting with colleagues at Coolidge and at other schools, and adjusting instructional practice in an effort to target student needs. As you can imagine, our primary concern is addressing the needs of our current fourth graders. It's important to note, however that teachers of students in grades K-2 also have work to do. MCAS scores in Grade 3 are the result of what all students have learned up to that point, and so we need to look closely at how well we are preparing students to be successful in the lower grades as well.

At School Council last week, parents wondered about how Coolidge compares to other schools. They'd noticed, for example, that Paton School has been consistently rated among the top 5% of schools in Massachusetts, while we have not. It's important to remember that MCAS scores are not the only difference that defines us. As Dr. Sawyer noted, it is quite predictable that overall achievement will differ from schools in the same school district with different demographics, particularly with regard to family income. On the whole, Coolidge scores *are* strong. When compared to schools of similar demographics across the state, our performance is even stronger. Finally, we ranked second among the Shrewsbury elementary schools in MCAS growth scores in both ELA and Math.

While MCAS performance is something we're proud of in Shrewsbury, this year the district did not meet its target for narrowing achievement gaps with student sub-groups, and Coolidge was one of five schools in the district that did not meet its gap-closing targets. Going forward we are especially interested in closing the achievement gap for our "high needs" and "low income" student sub groups. As many of you know, we are facing increasingly challenged circumstances by way of limited resources, increased mandates, and large class sizes and are concerned about maintaining our achievement scores while keeping on target with closing achievement gaps for all of our students. In the coming months, our teaching teams will be using MCAS results and other data to identify specific areas in which we can support continuous improvement for all our students. We look forward to continuing to work with parents as partners in the process. If you are interested in volunteering in our classrooms, please contact your child's teacher.

Sincerely,

*Amy*

Amy Clouter  
*Principal*

## **IMPORTANT DATES:**

### **Important Dates**

<b>October 11</b>	<b>School Store</b>
October 14	No School; Columbus Day
<b>October 15</b>	<b>PTO Meeting, 7 pm in the Media Center</b>
October 25	School Store
	Family Fun walk, 4-6 pm

## **FYI**

1. The staff is pleased to announce that the third annual Family Fun walk will be held on Friday, October 25<sup>th</sup> from 4:00 to 6. Please join us for some after school fun. Our fourth graders will raise funds for St. Anne's and all are invited to come in costume.
2. It's come to my attention that some parents have questions about Square 1 Art. Accordingly, the PTO has graciously allowed some time before our next meeting for an impromptu discussion. Please bring your questions and/or concerns to that forum, on Tuesday October 15<sup>th</sup> at 6:45 in the Media Center.